

ARTIST:
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Memorization

When I was growing up, I had to memorize a lot of poems in school. It wasn't always easy, but I've been grateful ever since to have those poems become part of my brain. Even now, forty or so years later, lines from the poems I memorized as a kid pop into my mind: what a gift! The poem below is one I learned in high school. It's a poem of praise, about the ways in which God's work shows up in the peculiar oddities of the world—a poem that draws in and celebrates those things that don't follow the norms of the larger world.

Key Vocabulary & Definition:

Pied: having two or more different colors

Brinded: having patchy or patterned coloring

Stipple: to mark with numerous small dots or specks

Instructions:

1. Try to remember one line at a time. Say it out loud. Then add a new line, and another newline. Give yourself time—it might take you a few days to memorize the whole thing. Lean into the rhymes—they can help you remember where you have to go, and help you feel that you've ended up in the right place. When you come to lines or phrases that don't seem to make logical sense, see if the sounds make some kind of sense that moves beyond logic.

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

--Gerard Manley Hopkins
Written in 1877, Published in 1913